

Indiana Department of Environmental Management

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(Text does not include verbatim comments)

Thank you Senator Simpson.

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be here with all of you at our first Statewide Brownfields Conference. I know you're going to learn a lot about brownfields redevelopment – these hidden opportunities for success around our state.

It is indeed fitting to have this event in Bloomington, because Mayor John Fernandez and Senator Vi Simpson, who call Bloomington and Monroe County home, have strong commitments to the brownfields redevelopment program. We selected Bloomington not only because of its location, but because, as a community, it has embraced brownfields redevelopment. It has notched several success stories in its belt and many of you will see these successes firsthand on this afternoon's tour. As the adage goes, seeing is believing. Brownfields redevelopment is an opportunity for communities, entrepreneurs and the environment, and we want to encourage more communities to take advantage of the various services available through the State's Brownfields Program.

Maybe Buckminster Fuller, an American engineer and father of the geodesic dome, had it about right. Although he wasn't talking about brownfields when he made the following remark, the remark does speak volumes about brownfields. He said,

"Reform the environment, stop trying to reform people. They will reform themselves if the environment is right".

The people in this room are pioneers, they are making the environment right and other people will surely follow your lead.

IDEM, along with the City of Bloomington, the Indiana Development Finance Authority, the Indiana Department of Commerce, the Indiana University Environmental Management Association and the Monroe Board of County Commissioners, is proud of the role each has played in organizing this conference. The fact that we're having this conference attests to the growing awareness of the potential brownfields hold to improve communities.

I want to take a moment to recognize the valuable assistance we have received from the Bloomington/Monroe County Convention and Visitors Bureau and, in particular, the Interagency Brownfields Task Force, in putting together this conference. They each have been tremendous partners in this endeavor.

The Interagency Brownfields Task Force was established in 1998, and various communities – maybe some with representatives in the audience this morning – have realized the benefits of the program. They can vouch for the significant role the task force, as well as the State's Brownfields Program, has played in reaching our collective mission.

That mission is to partner with communities to help promote the reuse of existing properties, recognize and clean up brownfields and revitalize economically depressed areas. The task force achieved one of its goals when it formed the Indiana Brownfields Advisory Team (IBAT), a subgroup of the task force, which the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development honored last year with its "Best Practices" award. The task force achieved its second goal when it produced a Brownfields Redevelopment Resource Guide, which will be discussed in greater detail later in this session. It is a valuable resource guide to get your hands on. In addition, IDEM, along with its partner, IDFA, provides technical and financial assistance to communities and all the task force member agencies assist with education and outreach.

Clearly, each of us in this room is here because we have a vested interest in redeveloping brownfields. And when we invest in brownfields, we improve the quality of life, economic base, and environment of each community involved. Each of us offers an important contribution to the redevelopment of these properties and it takes the whole team to get it done.

We are pleased to have such a diverse cross-section of public and private stakeholders here today: We have city government planning departments, neighborhood associations, county health departments, solid waste management districts, economic development corporations, the Southern Indiana Rural Development Project (SIRD), the Northwest Indiana Brownfields Redevelopment Project (NIBRP), environmental consulting firms, law firms and environmental laboratories.

Stakeholders and Hoosiers simply interested in brownfields redevelopment have come to Bloomington today from every geographic corner of Indiana.

They represent a cross section of communities from metropolitan areas as well as small cities and towns. Brownfields redevelopment is an opportunity throughout Indiana for all Hoosiers.

Conferees have traveled here from near and far. They have come from Allen, Elkhart, Kosciusko, Lake, LaPorte and St. Joseph counties in northern Indiana as well as from Clark, Perry, Gibson, Scott and Vanderburgh counties in southern Indiana.

And they also have come from just down the road in Marion and Vigo counties and from just around the corner in Brown and Monroe counties. In total, we have more than 250 attendees. But we have all come here today for one reason: to learn about brownfields redevelopment and to share our experiences and our success stories. That's because we know success breeds more success.

In addition, we believe today is a unique opportunity for communities to develop new partnerships and to gain additional tools and resources for their respective brownfields redevelopment projects – now or in the future. And while we can attend other brownfields

conferences around the country, there is no substitute for sharing resources and local lessons learned with our fellow Indiana stakeholders with whom we have so much in common.

Just as we are recycling our other resources, we should – **we must** – also be recycling our land through brownfields redevelopment opportunities.

Most urban and rural communities have abandoned, idled or under-used industrial or commercial properties on which expansion or redevelopment is complicated because of real or perceived environmental contamination. Examples include former gasoline service stations, foundries, manufacturing facilities and dry cleaners.

All of us can picture these brownfield sites back home in our mind's eye. And a growing number of us in the room today can picture in our mind's eye not only an old brownfield site, but also a site returned to productive use and transformed from eyesore to asset. These sites were once important employers and contributors to the economic and social well being of our communities, but times have changed. America's and Indiana's changing economic landscape ushered in a new economy, an economy that often times turned away from valuable assets.

Winston Churchill, the great British prime minister, wrote, "We shape our buildings and afterwards, our buildings shape us." And if Prime Minister Churchill, who was half-American [his mother was an American], were with us today, I think he, too, would advocate brownfields redevelopment.

We hope that during this conference you will benefit from the valuable opportunities to network with other stakeholders as well as to learn about public and private resources available to revitalize the brownfields in your communities.

A successful brownfields program or project certainly includes interdependency and synergy among stakeholders. Dr. Stephen R. Covey, the management guru, said:

"The essence of synergy is to value differences—to respect them, to build on strengths, to compensate for weaknesses".

Such interdependency and synergy provide the foundation for sustainable development, which should be the ultimate focus of each and every brownfields redevelopment project. We will explore this concept with you this morning in breakout sessions.

As this conference gets underway, we look forward to sharing local lessons learned with each other.

I hope the exchange of ideas will encourage greater participation in the State's Brownfields Program because this program is a win-win-win situation; it's a win for our communities' quality of life, it's a win for their economic bases and it's a win for our environment.

Now, it is my great pleasure to introduce Mayor John Fernandez of Bloomington. As I mentioned earlier, Bloomington, under Mayor Fernandez's leadership, has several notable

brownfields redevelopment accomplishments that he rightfully takes pride in. Mayor Fernandez has had a positive influence on his community and Indiana's environment is better because of his leadership . . . Please help me welcome Mayor Fernandez.